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RESEARCH REPORT

An Assessment of the Reliability and Validity of the Security Reclassification Scale for Women (SRSW)

2018 Nº R-412

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An Assessment of the Reliability and Validity of the Security Reclassification Scale for Women (SRSW)

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Executive Summary

Key words: *security classification, women offenders, SRSW, reliability, validity*

Security classification occurs at admission and throughout incarceration to ensure that offenders are placed at security levels that are appropriate to manage their risk of institutional misconduct, including violence and threat to public safety in the event of an escape. The Security Reclassification Scale for Women (SRSW) is an actuarial tool which, in conjunction with professional judgement, aids in the security reclassification of federally sentenced women after initial placement. The current study assesses the reliability and the validity of the SRSW to determine its appropriateness for continued use in informing the security review process.

The final sample of SRSW reviews included 645 reviews completed for 499 women offenders. The reviews were finalized between April 1, 2014 and March 31, 2017. SRSW reviews were included when results of the Custody Rating Scale (CRS) used for initial security level placement (i.e., Offender Security Level (OSL)) were available on the same term. Both reliability and validity (convergent and predictive) were assessed, and, where possible, analyses were conducted separately by Indigenous identity.

Findings indicated:

- the majority of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women were being recommended for minimum or medium security placement, the proportion of which did not vary significantly by Indigenous identity;
- although reviews generally occurred in a timely manner (i.e., within the two-year time frame indicated in policy), 15% of women had a review which occurred after the two-year review window had passed;
- decisions inconsistent with SRSW recommendations, outside of discretionary ranges and operational policy, were made relatively often. The rates of discordant decisions in the final classification are above those recommended in the literature for such tools. Reasons for inconsistencies were not always provided by caseworkers, but when rationales were available, they often cited issues with the offender's current behaviour and attitude; and
- the SRSW was generally found to be a reliable and valid classification tool. With respect to convergent validity, both the SRSW security level recommendations and the final security level decisions were weakly to moderately associated with existing risk and reintegration potential ratings on other tools. An exploration of the predictive validity of the SRSW for institutional and community outcomes found that both SRSW security level recommendations and final security level decisions were moderately related to minor offences, moderately to strongly related to serious offences, strongly related to discretionary release, and weakly related to revocations of conditional release.

The evidence suggests that continued use of the SRSW is warranted. However, two areas require further review. First, given the elevated rate of discrepancies between final placement and SRSW results, the development of monitoring protocols may reduce these rates in the future. Secondly, the percentage of reviews occurring after the two-year time frame mandated in policy should be examined.

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Introduction

Security classification plays a central role in the management of institutional risk and thereby contributes to public safety (Farr, 2000; Motiuk, 1997). The allocation of offenders to a given level of security based on risk of institutional misconduct, including violence and threats to public safety such as risk of escape, allows offenders with similar risk profiles to be managed in a manner reflective of their security risk (Vazquez & Bussert, 2016). The use of minimum, medium, and maximum levels of security allows for efficiencies, promoting a more effective correctional environment as offenders make progress in fulfilling their correctional plan.

Currently, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) relies on actuarial tools as well as clinical judgement to place offenders in various levels of security in federal correctional facilities. Research indicates that actuarial tools are both equitable and reliable in predicting institutional misconduct and recidivism (Austin, 1983; Austin & Hardyman, 2004; Blanchette & Taylor, 2005; Bonta, 2002; Gobeil, 2008; Gobeil & Blanchette, 2007). Given their reliability, these tools reduce the likelihood of misclassification (Austin, 1983; Bonta & Motiuk, 1990; Brennan, 1998; Brennan, 2007; Buchanan, Whitlow, & Austin, 1986). Recognizing these benefits, actuarial tools have been developed at CSC for the security classification of both men and women to inform the security classification decision process in conjunction with professional judgement.

Specifics of the security classification process in Canadian federal correctional facilities are mandated by the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (CCRA, 1992 c.20). Section 30 requires that all federally sentenced offenders be assigned a security classification of minimum, medium, or maximum. The CCRA section 4.c also indicates that CSC "use measures that are consistent with the protection of society, staff members and offenders and that are limited to only what is necessary and proportionate to attain the purposes of this Act." Within this legislative context, the Commissioner of CSC sets the guidelines under which offender security classifications are made as outlined in Commissioner's Directive (CD) 705-7.[1] Decisions regarding security classification and penitentiary placement are informed by assessments of the following areas: institutional adjustment, escape risk, and risk to the public in the event of an

[1] The Commissioner's Directive (CD) was updated in 2018. The study period, however, aligns with the previous version of the CD for these reasons all references will be to the former CD.

escape. In addition, CD 710-6[1] Review of Inmate Security Classification specifies how the legislative framework and guidelines are applied in security level decisions made after initial security level placements. All security level assessments, whether initial placement or a review, are ultimately based on decisions relying on professional judgement which is informed by the above-mentioned areas as well as the recommendation of actuarial tools and, in the case of Indigenous offenders, the consideration of Aboriginal Social History (ASH) and information provided in Elder review.

Within each security level, there are established security requirements and behavioural norms and differences between the programming and privileges afforded to offenders. Women classified as minimum or medium security are housed in living units – houses with shared living space where women are expected to share the responsibility for daily tasks (e.g., preparing meals, cleaning, etc.). These living units can be located either inside or outside the perimeter fence of the institution. Under minimal monitoring, both minimum and medium security women are expected to interact effectively and responsibly and demonstrate a high level of motivation towards self-improvement by actively participating in their correctional plan. Medium security women can only be accommodated in units located inside the perimeter fence, whereas minimum security women may be in units both inside and outside the perimeter fence. Women classified as maximum security are housed in secure units that have added static security measures (e.g., closed pods, command post, a secure yard, etc.) and their movement is regulated. While women in maximum security are still expected to interact effectively and responsibly, they are also subject to regular direct and indirect monitoring and must demonstrate at least a minimum interest in participating in their correctional plan (Commissioner's Directive (CD) 706). Women inmates classified as maximum security also have access through off unit movement, in accordance with CD 578, to programs, activities and services in other areas of the institution.

For security classification purposes, CSC makes use of the Custody Rating Scale (CRS) and the Security Reclassification Scale (SRS) or the Security Reclassification Scale for Women (SRSW). The CRS is used to inform decisions regarding initial custody placements for both men and women upon admission to a federal penitentiary. For reclassification purposes the SRS is used with men and SRSW is used with women. Guidelines generally stipulate that a security reclassification review "will be completed at least once every two years for inmates classified at

maximum or medium security" (for further details on the reclassification exceptions please see CD 710-6).

In response to criticism regarding the use of male-centered instruments for women (see Brennan, 2007; Farr, 2000; Hannah-Moffat & Shaw, 2001; Hardyman & VanVoorhis, 2004; VanVoorhis & Presser, 2001), the SRSW was developed by Blanchette and Taylor (2005) using a sample of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous women. This gender-informed tool was implemented fully in 2005, and since this implementation, several assessments have been conducted to ensure its reliability and validity for various women offender populations and timeframes. Consistently, the SRSW has been found to be both a reliable and valid tool for reviewing security level placement for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous women (see Blanchette & Taylor, 2005; Gobeil & Blanchette, 2007; Gobeil, 2008; Thompson, McConnell & Paquin-Marseille, 2013; McConnell, 2012).

In practice, the SRSW is used as part of the security classification review process to inform security placement decisions in conjunction with professional judgment. The SRSW recommends a security level for a given offender through weighting the following nine dynamic factors: 1) placement in involuntary segregation, 2) progress or motivation regarding correctional plan, 3) presence of serious disciplinary offences, 4) number of recorded incidents, 5) number of successful escorted temporary absences, 6) CRS incident history rating score, 7) most recent level of pay, 8) ever unlawfully at large (UAL) from temporary absence, work release, or supervision, and 9) prosocial family contact. Each variable is optimally weighted (see Appendix A for weighting) through statistical procedures derived in a computerized application which accesses information available in electronic administrative files. While a small number of items may not change over the custodial sentence (e.g., CRS incident history rating score), the majority of items consider a woman's experience and behaviour within the review period or a period of at least six months, at minimum. As such, the assessment tool is dynamic. The SRSW recommendation is then taken into consideration by correctional professionals (e.g., primary worker). In the case where the correctional professional's recommendation is not consistent with the tool, they provide an alternative recommendation based on evidence and with a comprehensive rationale. Professional judgement may also be used when scores fall within two discretionary ranges surrounding the cut-off scores between maximum and medium security and

medium and minimum security (see Appendix A). For these reasons, SRSW recommendations may not concord with actual security level placements.

Current Study

The goal of the current study is to determine whether the SRSW remains a reliable and valid tool to inform the security placement decisions at CSC. Several aspects of reliability as well as convergent and predictive validity will be assessed. The following research questions will be examined:

1) Is the SRSW and its items reliable for use in the security reclassification of women?
    a. What is the reliability of the tool?
    b. How consistent are tool recommendations with caseworker recommendations and actual placements?
2) Is the SRSW valid for use in the security reclassification of women?
    a. Does the SRSW recommendation have convergent validity with other risk assessments such as risk and reintegration potential?
    b. Does the SRSW recommendation predict institutional and release outcomes? Can the tool discriminate between security levels and the following outcomes:
        i. Minor and Serious Institutional Offences
        ii. Type of Conditional Release
        iii. Revocation of Conditional Release?

Method

Sample

The final sample included 645 SRSW reviews completed for a total 499 women offenders. The reviews were finalized between April 1, 2014 and March 31, 2017. SRSW reviews were included when a CRS which was used for initial security level placement (i.e., Offender Security Level (OSL)) was present on the same term. All data compiled for the current study was extracted from databases of the Offender Management System (OMS), which holds all computerized offender records for federal offenders.

Overall, the women in the sample were in their early to mid-thirties at the time of their first SRSW security review and were serving sentences of approximately three years for schedule 1 or homicide offences. The demographic and incarceration characteristics of the sample did differ by Indigenous identity. Indigenous women tended to be younger and were more likely to be convicted of schedule 1 or homicide offences and receive higher initial security classifications according to the CRS (see Table B1, Appendix B).

Measures

The following information related to the SRSW was captured: the total score on the tool, the security level placement recommended by the tool, as well as the individual items from which the total scores were derived. All information regarding when the review period started and ended, as well as when the final security placement was included. In addition to the recommended and final security level placements, caseworker recommendations and the rationale that they may have provided for their recommendations was obtained from OMS.

In addition to the SRSW-specific information, demographic-, sentence-, and risk-related factors were examined for the women in the study to assess differences in profiles. These factors included: age, marital status, type of sentence, length of sentence, offence type, and initial security placement as well as the assessment of overall static risk and reintegration potential was extracted from the Offender Intake Assessment (CSC, 2012).

Several measures were extracted in order to assesses convergent validity. Specifically, information regarding the initial Criminal Risk Index (CRI) and the assessments of reintegration potential were collected closest to the date of the SRSW assessment. Although there is no ideal tool by which to assess convergent validity of the SRSW among the other case management

tools that CSC uses, these particular items were chosen to assess convergent validity because to some extent they consider institutional adjustment, escape risk, and/or risk to the public in the event of an escape.

Finally, the following data were captured to assess the predictive validity of the SRSW scale: having committed a serious or minor institutional offence, escapes,[2] whether release was discretionary or statutory, and revocation of conditional release for any reason. Each of these outcomes consider some aspect of institutional adjustment and escape risk, as well as risk to the public.

Analyses

Results are presented for all women, and separately for Indigenous and non-Indigenous women to ensure that the scale is reliable and valid for both groups. These analyses, when there was sufficient sample size, can be found in the appendices.

Analyses examining the SRSW tool were predominantly descriptive. For example, means, variability and distributions were examined of the total score as well as the recommended SRSW security level placement. Bivariate analyses examined if there were notable differences in scores or placement by demographic and sentence characteristics. In addition to these analyses, an examination of the timing of SRSW reviews was conducted as well an examination of discretionary ranges and inconsistencies in security classifications between SRSW recommendations, caseworker recommendations and actual security placement.

Reliability was also assessed using item-to-total correlations and Cronbach's alpha. The SRSW item distributions were examined to assess for any skewness which may affect the overall reliability of the scale.

Given that women could have multiple assessments completed, it was necessary to adjust our statistical methods to examine convergent and predictive validity. [3] Thus, one security classification event was randomly selected for each woman in our study. This results in the

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[2] It was not possible to examine escapes as no women escaped or attempted to escape who were included in the study or the specific timeframes following the review periods.

[3] In order to assess if the clustering of SRSW events within a single woman would bias standard error estimates an Interclass Correlation was calculated (Yadav & Agarwal, 2013). The Interclass Correlation assesses the correlation between events clustered within an individual in this case as well as the correlations between individuals. If the correlation is high, it means that less unique information is being add within subjects as compared to the information that is being uniquely added between individuals. In the case of non-Indigenous and Indigenous women, the ICC was 0.51 and 0.64 respectively. As such, it is necessary to adjust standard error calculations to account for clustering or to change sampling strategies to provide only one per individual.

correct estimations of standard errors for our study.

Wald Chi-square and gamma were used to assess whether there was convergent between the CRI and Reintegration Potential and both the SRSW security level recommendation and actual placement.

Finally, predictive validity was assessed in two ways. First, Wald Chi-square and Cramer's V were examined to whether there was a general association between both the SRSW security level recommendation and the actual security level placement with the likelihood of having committed an institutional offence (minor or serious), having a discretionary release, and a revocation of conditional release. Second, for those outcomes where time at risk must be considered (i.e., time to committing an institutional offence or time to having a conditional release revoked), Cox regression was conducted to assess the discriminate capacity of the SRSW security level recommendation and actual security placement with regard to experiencing either outcome. In addition, a Harrell's c was calculated to assess the overall predictive magnitude of the recommendation or actual placement.

Results

The results are presented in three major sections. The first section examines the distribution of the SRSW, SRSW security level recommendations, discretionary ranges, and caseworker security level recommendations, and actual security level placement as well as inconsistencies between the recommendations and actual placement. The second section of the report examines the reliability of the SRSW. Finally, the third section of the results examines the convergent and predictive validity of the SRSW security level recommendation and actual security placements for a variety of outcomes.

SRSW Scores and Security Recommendations.

Although the range of scores for the SRSW is -10.10 to 22.40, the SRSW scores in the current cohort ranged from -10.10 to 19.65 for all women (see Figure A1 in Appendix A for SRSW scale thresholds). Women had a mean score of 0.57 (SD = 6.74); the median score was -0.50 with a first quartile score of -5.30, and a third quartile of 5.70. Results were similar for Indigenous offenders (Table B2 in Appendix B). Generally, the range of scores meant that the majority of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous women were recommended to minimum or medium security (see Table 1). Although there were minor variations in the percentage of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women recommended to each security level, these differences were statistically non-significant. Interestingly, similar proportions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women were placed in minimum, medium, and maximum security, despite proportionately more Indigenous women being rated as having significantly higher static risk (Indigenous women: 53%; non-Indigenous women: 34%) and higher dynamic risk (Indigenous women: 59%; non-Indigenous women: 47%).

Demographic and offence characteristics were examined to identify differences by SRSW security level recommendation. These comparisons indicated that younger women were more likely to be recommended for higher levels of security. Women recommended for minimum security (M_{age} = 36, SD = 10), for example, were significantly older than those recommended for medium (M_{age} = 34, SD = 10) or maximum security (M_{age} = 30, SD = 7). Results did not differ by Indigenous identity. Detailed results can be found in Table B3 in Appendix B.

Table 1

Distribution of SRSW security level recommendations and final security level decisions by Indigenous identity

	SRSW Security Level Recommendations		Final Security Level Decision	
	Non-Indigenous women	Indigenous women	Non-Indigenous women	Indigenous women
	% (*n*)	% (*n*)	% (*n*)	% (*n*)
Minimum	41 (143)	38 (113)	40 (141)	35 (103)
Medium	45 (158)	45 (133)	45 (158)	47 (139)
Maximum	14 (50)	16 (48)	15 (52)	18 (52)

Timing of SRSW Security Reviews

The majority of offenders experienced only one SRSW security review during their custodial sentence (82% of non-Indigenous women and 72% of Indigenous women), with the remaining women having up to 6 security reviews. As can be seen in Table 2 women had a SRSW security review within about 14 months after their admission or completion of the CRS, on average. Fifteen percent of women had their first SRSW security review after two years, with these reviews occurring between 24 and 97 months. For those women with more than one SRSW security review, the average amount of time between reviews ranged from 7 months for non-Indigenous women to 9 months for Indigenous women.

Table 2

Timing of SRSW security reviews (mean number of months to review)

	Non-Indigenous women	Indigenous women
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Average time to first SRSW security review [a]	15 (15)	14 (14)
Average time between SRSW security reviews	7 (6)	9 (7)

[a] The number of days to the first SRSW security review was determined by counting the number of days from the later of the admission date and date of the initial security level placement (CRS placement).

Discretionary Ranges

SRSW scores that fall within 10% of the threshold score for maximum security (7.80 to 9.55) and medium security (-2.35 to -2.90) are considered to be in the discretionary range of the scale (see Figure A1 in Appendix A). Security review assessments with scores falling within these ranges can, without further justification, be placed in a higher or lower level of security than that recommended by the SRSW. Less than 10% of women's scores fell within the discretionary ranges (non-Indigenous women: 9%; Indigenous women: 8%). Of these scores, around one-quarter resulted in higher security levels (non-Indigenous women: 22%; Indigenous women: 26%) and approximately one-third of women were placed at lower levels of security (non-Indigenous women: 30%; Indigenous women: 38%). The remainder were placed at the same level as recommended by the SRSW.

Inconsistencies in Security Reclassification

Inconsistencies in security level recommendations can occur at two points in the decision process. First, an inconsistency can exist between the SRSW security level recommendation and the recommendation by the caseworker. At this point, the caseworker can recommend a security level different from the SRSW based on a comprehensive rationale; rationales must be provided when the SRSW score is outside discretionary ranges. Secondly, an inconsistency with the SRSW recommendation can occur when the warden or Kikawinaw[4] makes the final security level decision. The decision to recommend or place women in a higher or lower level of security when their SRSW score falls within a discretionary range will not be considered inconsistent with the SRSW classification for the purposes of this study.

Rates of Inconsistency

Generally, there were minimal inconsistencies between the SRSW security level recommendation, the security level recommended by the caseworker at the time of SRSW completion, and the final security level placement (see Table 3 for breakdown by Indigenous identity). No significant differences were noted for the rate of inconsistency by Indigenous self-identification. For reviews not inside the discretionary range, inconsistencies were most frequent (27%) between the SRSW recommendations and the final decisions; followed by inconsistencies

[4] Institutional Head at the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge

between the SRSW recommendations and caseworker recommendations (24%), and then with lower discordance being noted between caseworker recommendations and final decisions (12%).

For both non-Indigenous and Indigenous women, caseworker recommendations and final decisions were generally to higher levels of security than those recommended by the SRSW. Just over two-thirds of caseworker recommendations were to higher security levels when the recommendation differed from the SRSW (non-Indigenous women: 67%; Indigenous women: 72%). The proportion of cases being recommended to higher levels of security decreased when considering inconsistencies between SRSW recommendations and final security decisions with 57% of cases resulting in higher security level placements (non-Indigenous women: 54%; Indigenous women: 61%). Interestingly, inconsistencies between caseworker recommendations and final security level placements often resulted in placements at a lower level of security (non-Indigenous women: 70%; Indigenous women: 77%).

Reasons for Inconsistencies

A random sampling of 25% ($n = 36$) of SRSW assessment decisions were reviewed to examine the rationales for discordant decisions that fell outside of the discretionary ranges. Virtually all discordant decisions had an accompanying rationale. Due to small numbers, it was not possible to examine differences in rationale by Indigenous identity. The majority of rationales included information pertaining to current behaviour or attitude (see Table 4). This theme included rationales such as involvement in drug and other contraband activities and verbal and physical altercations. Behavioural or attitudinal history was the next most often cited rationale provided by caseworkers who were providing a recommendation inconsistent with the SRSW. Rationales provided for discordant decisions for Indigenous women were reviewed to assess whether they considered Aboriginal Social History factors. Overall, 88% of rationales comprehensively considered Aboriginal Social History factors.

Table 3

Association between security level recommended by the SRSW, security level recommended by the caseworker and final security level placement

	Non-Indigenous Women				Indigenous Women			
	SRSW Security Level Recommendation			Wald χ^2	SRSW Security Level Recommendation			Wald χ^2
	Minimum % (*n*)	Medium % (*n*)	Maximum % (*n*)		Minimum % (*n*)	Medium % (*n*)	Maximum % (*n*)	
Security Level Recommended by Caseworker [a]								
Minimum	76 (105)	11 (16)	0 (0)	272.2***	72 (79)	9 (11)	0 (0)	228.8***
Medium	24 (33)	76 (108)	16 (6)		28 (30)	76 (90)	19 (8)	
Maximum	†	13 (19)	84 (31)		0 (0)	15 (18)	81 (35)	
Final Security Placement								
Minimum	76 (105)	20 (29)	0 (0)	188.8***	76 (83)	13 (15)	0 (0)	210.8***
Medium	24 (33)	69 (98)	38 (14)		24 (26)	74 (88)	28 (12)	
Maximum	†	11 (16)	62 (23)		0 (0)	13 (16)	72 (31)	
	Caseworker Security Level Recommendation				Caseworker Security Level Recommendation			
	Minimum % (*n*)	Medium % (*n*)	Maximum % (*n*)		Minimum % (*n*)	Medium % (*n*)	Maximum % (*n*)	
Final Security Placement								
Minimum	93 (115)	13 (19)	0 (0)	395.1***	97 (87)	9 (11)	0 (0)	397.1***
Medium	7 (9)	84 (124)	24 (11)		†	89 (114)	17 (9)	
Maximum	0 (0)	†	76 (35)		0 (0)	†	83 (44)	

Note. Column totals may not add to 100% due to rounding. The numbers in this table are reflective of 319 security reviews for non-Indigenous women and 271 security reviews for Indigenous women. [a] In every offender security level review, a recommended decision is provided by the caseworker and may not concord with the SRSW recommendation. Wardens are also not required to take the commendation of the caseworker. *** $p < .001$. † Numbers supressed due to frequency < 5.

Table 4

Reasons for inconsistency between the SRSW and caseworker security recommendations

Theme	% (*n*)
Current behaviour or attitude	53 (19)
Behavioural or attitudinal history	39 (14)
Progress on programming and/or dynamic factors	28 (10)
Requires structure or the support of a higher level of security	25 (9)
Risk to others or self	22 (8)
Other	25 (9)

Note. $n = 36$

Reliability of the SRSW

The standardized SRSW item-to-total correlations were calculated. Most items were weakly to moderately associated with the total score (see Table 5). Cronbach's alpha, a measure of internal consistency, was computed and slight variations in the homogeneity of the scale was observed by Indigenous identity (Indigenous $\alpha = 0.67$; non-Indigenous $\alpha = 0.60$). Overall, the lower alpha coefficients could be reflective of many issues such as the presence of sub-domains within the scale itself[5] or the non-normality of the items included in the scale (Cronbach's alpha tends to be downwardly biased when using ordinal variables (Zumbo, Gadermann, & Zeisser, 2007)).[6]

[5] The number of items included in the scale (Cronbach's alpha tends to be downwardly biased when there are fewer items in the measure (Cortina, 1993)).

[6] Further analyses explored whether the internal consistency of the SRSW could be improved with the exclusion of certain variables. For non-Indigenous women, internal consistency could be improved with the removal of "Ever unlawfully at large from temporary absence, work release, or supervision" ($\alpha = 0.61$) and "Number of successful escorted temporary absences" ($\alpha = 0.63$). While for Indigenous women, internal consistency would be improved with the removal of "Ever unlawfully at large from temporary absence, work release, or supervision" ($\alpha = 0.68$). However, given the mandate in the CCRA to assess escape risk in security classifications, it is necessary they remain within the SRSW assessment tool.

Table 5

Standardized SRSW item-to-total correlations and descriptive statistics

	Non-Indigenous women		Indigenous women	
	r	M (SD)	*r*	M (SD)
Involuntary segregation (CCRA Section 31 (3-A))	0.53	0.61 (2.32)	0.57	1.01 (2.49)
Correctional plan progress/motivation	0.37	-0.83 (2.11)	0.37	-0.88 (2.04)
Serious disciplinary offences	0.42	-0.28 (1.61)	0.45	-0.12 (1.67)
Number of recorded incidents	0.41	1.22 (1.94)	0.44	1.16 (1.93)
Number of successful escorted temporary absences	-0.03	0.21 (0.99)	0.27	0.04 (1.01)
Custody Rating Scale incident history	0.27	-0.23 (1.15)	0.31	0.13 (1.26)
Pay level – most recent	0.32	-0.46 (0.58)	0.44	-0.22 (0.62)
Ever unlawfully at large from temporary absence, work release, or supervision	0.03	-0.14 (0.38)	0.01	-0.14 (0.39)
Family contact	0.26	0.06 (0.58)	0.32	0.09 (0.60)

Convergent Validity

As previously noted, there is no ideal choice among the case management tools used in CSC by which to assess convergent validity of the SRSW. Nevertheless, results showed that both SRSW security level recommendations and final security level decisions were weakly to moderately associated with measures of risk and reintegration (see Table 6, for more detailed information see Table B4 in Appendix B). Due to small numbers, results could not be disaggregated by Indigenous identity; however, the trends appear similar for Indigenous and non-Indigenous women.

Table 6

Relationship between SRSW security level recommendations, final security level decisions, and risk, and reintegration potential ratings for all women

	SRSW Security Level Recommendation	Final Security Level Decision
CRI	Moderate	Weak
Reintegration Potential	Moderate	Moderate

Note. Information based on correlational analyses using gamma. Values of less than .30 represent a weak effect, values between .31 and .60 represent a moderate effect, and values greater than .60 represent a strong effect (Healey & Prus, 2015).

Predictive Validity

The predictive validity of SRSW security level recommendations and final security level

decisions was examined for the following outcomes: institutional offences (both serious and minor), discretionary release and revocations of conditional release. Generally, the findings indicated that both SRSW security level recommendations and final placement were predictive of the examined outcomes (see Table 7). Specifically, as security level recommendation or placement increased to maximum there was a notable increase in the proportion of women also experiencing institutional offences (see Table B5 in Appendix B for further detail). In regard to discretionary release, a clear relationship emerged with those in the lower recommended or placement levels of security being more likely to have received discretionary release (see Table B6 in Appendix B for further detail). The predictive validity for both the SRSW security level recommendation and final placement were weakly associated with revocations. In both cases, the capacity to discriminate between minimum and medium security levels to well predict revocations was minimal (see Table B7 in Appendix B for further detail).

Due to small numbers, the association between SRSW security level recommendations and final security level decisions and institutional offences is not presented by Indigenous identity. Nonetheless, results for institutional offences and discretionary release followed the same trends for Indigenous women as for the total sample. Comparatively, SRSW security level recommendations and final security level decisions were not predictive of any return to custody for non-Indigenous women.

Table 7

Predictive validity between SRSW security level recommendations, final security level decisions, and correctional outcomes for all women

	SRSW Security Level Recommendation	Final Security Level Decision
Institutional offence		
Minor Offences	Moderate	Moderate
Major Offences	Strong	Moderate
Discretionary Release	Strong	Strong
Revocation of Conditional Release	Weak	Weak

Note. Estimates of the predictive validity is based on Harrell's C derived from Cox regression. The values of .56, .64, and .71 are considered small, moderate, and large effect sizes, respectively.

Discussion

Consistent with previous studies (Blanchette & Taylor, 2005; Gobeil, 2008; Thompson et al., 2013), the Security Reclassification Scale for Women (SRSW) was found to be both reliable and valid for use with both non-Indigenous and Indigenous women.

More specifically, the SRSW scores in the current cohort were similar to those in previous studies (Blanchette & Taylor, 2005; Gobeil, 2008; Thompson et al., 2013), with the majority of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women being recommended for minimum or medium security placement. Notably, comparable proportions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women were being recommended and placed in minimum, medium, and maximum security. This is consistent with findings from previous validation research (Gobeil, 2008; Thompson et al., 2013).

The timing of SRSW security reviews was examined and results showed that, on average, women received their first SRSW security review by 14 months after admission to custody or the completion of the CRS. While these findings are consistent with Commissioner's Directive 710-6, it is notable that 15% of women did not have a review within the mandated two-year time frame.

With regard to inconsistencies between the SRSW security level recommendation, the security level recommended by the caseworker, and the final security level placement, generally, caseworker recommendations and final decisions resulted in higher levels of security than the SRSW recommendations. This result is consistent with findings from previous validation studies (Blanchette & Taylor, 2005; Gobeil, 2008; Thompson et al., 2013). Inconsistencies between caseworker recommendations and final security level placements often resulted in women being placed in a lower level of security. When reasons were provided for discrepancies between SRSW security level recommendation and caseworker recommendation, women's current behaviour or attitude was most frequently cited as the reason for making the discordant recommendations. Ultimately, 27% of the final security level placements were inconsistent with the SRSW recommendation. Traditionally, it is suggested that a tool is no longer useful if more than 20% of its recommendations are changed (Brennan & Austin, 1997). CSC plans to create an automated report to monitor security reclassification timelines and overrides at the national, regional, and local levels as part of the response to the recommendation in the report *Preparing*

Women Offenders for Release (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2017). It is possible that the monitoring of these overrides will reduce the number of inconsistencies to a more acceptable level. At the very least the monitoring may allow the opportunity for CSC to understand when, how, and why the overrides are occurring and to address this if necessary.

The SRSW was generally found to be a reliable classification tool for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous women which is consistent with previous validation studies (Blanchette & Taylor, 2005; Gobeil, 2008; Thompson et al., 2013). While internal consistency estimates could possibly be improved with the exclusion of indicators such as "Ever unlawfully at large from temporary absence, work release, or supervision," the improvement to the reliability of the measure would be small and, given the legislative mandate of these items their removal would not be pragmatic.

Two types of validity were assessed in the current study: convergent validity and predictive validity. With regards to convergent validity, both the SRSW security level recommendations and the final security level decisions were weakly to moderately associated with existing risk and reintegration potential ratings. These results were similar to previous validation studies (Blanchette & Taylor, 2005; Gobeil, 2008; Thompson et al., 2013). An exploration of the predictive validity of the SRSW for institutional and community outcomes found that both SRSW security level recommendations and final security level decisions were moderately related to minor offences, moderately to strongly related to serious offences, strongly related to discretionary release, and weakly related to revocations of conditional release. These findings align with or are in fact, stronger than those of previous validation studies (Blanchette & Taylor, 2005; Gobeil, 2008; Thompson et al., 2013). Overall, these results support the continued use of the SRSW with women to inform the security review process.

It should be noted that the SRSW recommendations were found to have similar predictive power as the final placements. Given that SRSW is a tool which is meant to inform final decisions, it is unsurprising that the predictive accuracy of the recommendation of the SRSW and the final placement are approximate. Nevertheless, evidence indicates that actuarial tools tend to be more equitable, liberal, and accurate than clinical decision-making alone (Austin, 1983; Austin & Hardyman, 2004; Bengtson & Långström, 2007; Blanchette & Taylor, 2005; Bonta, 2002; Gobeil, 2008; Gobeil & Blanchette, 2007; Perrault, Paiva-Salisbury & Vincent, 2012), and that discrepancies between the tool and final decisions should not exceed 20% (Brennan & Austin,

1997). The planned formal monitoring of overrides will provide opportunities to assess why overrides are occurring and to address issues which may be leading to overrides.

Limitations

Due to small numbers, it was not always possible to disaggregate results by Indigenous identity, particularly when examining the predictive validity of the assessment tool. Therefore, we cannot say with certainty that the SRSW can predict institutional and community outcomes for Indigenous and- non-Indigenous women separately. In future research a larger sample should be drawn in order to disaggregate all analyses by Indigenous identity. In addition, it was challenging to assess convergent validity of the tool since there are no "gold standard" tools by which to assess security reclassification.

Conclusion

Overall, this research found the SRSW to be a reliable and valid classification tool. The SRSW recommendations and final security level decisions placed women in appropriate security placements, with similar proportions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women being placed in each security level. Although continued use is merited, consideration should be given to the timing of reviews for particular groups of women offenders and the current rate of final placement decisions that are inconsistent with the scale. Future research could examine whether additional items could improve the predictive accuracy of the scale and decrease the number of discordant final security placements.

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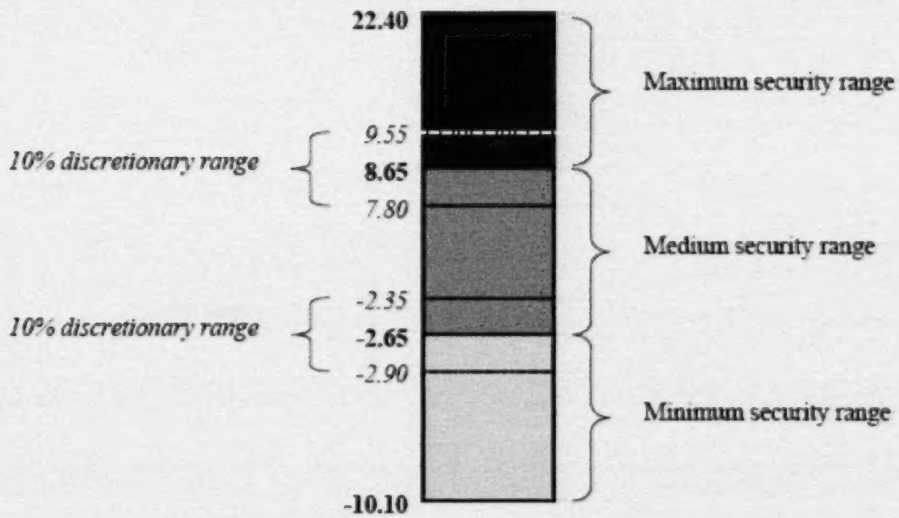
Appendix A: Supplemental information for Security Reclassification Scale for Women

Table A1

Security Reclassification Scale for Women (SRSW) Items and Weights (Blanchette & Taylor, 2005)

Item	Weight
1. Involuntary segregation (CCRA Section 31 (3-A))	6.45
2. Correctional plan progress/ motivation	5.60
3. Serious disciplinary offences	5.50
4. Number of recorded incidents	5.00
5. Number of successful escorted temporary absences	2.55
6. Custody Rating Scale incident history	2.55
7. Pay level - most recent	2.10
8. Ever unlawfully at large from temporary absence, work release, or supervision	1.45
9. Family contact	1.30

Figure A1. Range of possible SRSW scores, including cut-offs for each security recommendation and their respective discretionary ranges



Appendix B: Supplementary Results

Table B1

Demographic and incarceration characteristics of SRSW sample (N = 499)

	Non-Indigenous Women ($N = 283$)	Indigenous Women ($N = 216$)
	% (*n*) or *M (SD)*	% (*n*) or *M (SD)*
Demographic characteristics		
Age [a]	36 (12)	33 (8)
Marital status		
Has partner	32 (90)	27 (59)
Single	67 (191)	70 (151)
Unknown	†	3 (6)
Incarceration Characteristics		
Length of aggregate sentence (years) [b]	4 (3)	4 (2)
Length of aggregate sentence		
3 years or less	44 (125)	44 (94)
More than 3 years	44 (124)	43 (92)
Indeterminate	12 (34)	14 (30)
Type of offence		
Schedule 1 and homicide	57 (160)	74 (160)
Other	43 (123)	26 (56)
Security level [c]		
Minimum	14 (41)	5 (11)
Medium	68 (192)	74 (160)
Maximum	18 (50)	21 (45)

[a] age relates to age at first SRSW security review. [b] excludes those with an indeterminate sentence. [c] security level is based on the initial classification determined by the custody rating scale. † Numbers supressed due to frequency < 5.

Table B2

SRSW scores – range, mean, standard deviation, first, second (median), and third quartile by Indigenous identity

Statistic	Non-Indigenous women	Indigenous women
Range	-10.10 to 18.35	-10.10 to 19.65
Mean	0.15	1.07
Standard deviation	6.44	7.06
First quartile	-5.30	-5.30
Second quartile (median)	-1.05	0.60
Third quartile	4.90	6.45

Note. For security level thresholds of the SRSW see Figure A1 in Appendix A.

Table B3

Association between demographic and incarceration characteristics and security level recommendations of the SRSW for all security review decisions

	Non-Indigenous women				Indigenous women			
	Minimum	Medium	Maximum		Minimum	Medium	Maximum	
	% (*n*) or *M (SD)*			F or χ^2	% (*n*) or *M (SD)*			F or χ^2
Age at review	37 (12)	36 (12)	31 (8)	4.73**	35 (8)	32 (8)	29 (6)	10.8***
Length of aggregate sentence								
3 years or less	37 (55)	50 (73)	13 (19)	9.03^{ns}	45 (51)	42 (48)	13 (15)	5.76^{ns}
More than 3 years	41 (67)	41 (67)	18 (30)		33 (45)	46 (62)	21 (28)	
Indeterminate	53 (21)	45 (18)	†		38 (17)	51 (23)	11 (5)	
Offence type								
Schedule 1 or homicide	38 (74)	44 (86)	18 (34)	4.04^{ns}	39 (85)	43 (95)	18 (40)	2.67^{ns}
Other	44 (69)	46 (72)	10 (16)		38 (28)	51 (38)	11 (8)	

^{ns} non-significant, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

†Information suppressed due to fewer than 5 individuals in the category.

Table B4

Associations between SRSW security level recommendations, final security level decisions, and risk, and reintegration potential ratings for all women

	SRSW Security Level Recommendation			Wald χ^2
	Minimum	Medium	Maximum	γ (ASE)
	% (*n*)	% (*n*)	% (*n*)	
CRI				
No rating	47 (28)	45 (27)	8 (5)	66.5***
Low	56 (49)	41 (36)	3 (3)	0.32 (0.05)
Low-Moderate	63 (29)	28 (13)	9 (4)	
Moderate	61 (46)	33 (25)	7 (5)	
High-Moderate	41 (38)	52 (48)	7 (6)	
High	23 (32)	50 (69)	26 (36)	
Reintegration Potential				
Low	24 (38)	51 (81)	26 (41)	63.7***
Medium	55 (167)	40 (122)	6 (17)	-0.50 (0.06)
High	52 (17)	45 (15)	3 (1)	
	Final Security Level Decision			Wald χ^2
	Minimum	Medium	Maximum	γ (ASE)
	% (*n*)	% (*n*)	% (*n*)	
CRI				
No rating	52 (31)	47 (28)	2 (1)	71.2***
Low	44 (39)	49 (43)	7 (6)	0.29 (0.05)
Low-Moderate	48 (22)	43 (20)	9 (4)	
Moderate	66 (50)	25 (19)	9 (7)	
High-Moderate	52 (48)	42 (39)	5 (5)	
High	21 (29)	53 (72)	26 (36)	
Reintegration Potential				
Low	19 (30)	59 (95)	22 (35)	67.4***
Medium	56 (172)	36 (111)	8 (23)	-0.53 (0.06)
High	52 (17)	45 (15)	3 (1)	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; γ = gamma; ASE = asymptotic standard error

Table B5

Rates of misconduct by security levels

	Minor Institutional Offence		Serious Institutional Offence	
SRSW Security Level Recommendation	% (*n*)	HR	% (*n*)	HR
Minimum	19 (43)	-	6 (13)	-
Medium	46 (101)	3.03***	19 (41)	3.50***
Maximum	64 (38)	5.39***	47 (28)	11.71***
Model fit				
Wald χ^2 (df)	60.42 (2)***		56.23 (2)***	
Harrell's c	0.66		0.72	
Final Security Level Decision				
Minimum	16 (34)	-	5 (10)	-
Medium	54 (120)	3.85***	24 (54)	5.17***
Maximum	47 (28)	4.65***	31 (18)	8.98***
Model fit				
Wald χ^2 (df)	53.69 (2)***		31.88 (2)***	
Harrell's c	0.66		0.69	

Note. The percentages associated in this table do not control for time at risk; however, the hazard ratios, Wald χ^2, and Harrell's c values control for time at risk.

HR = hazard ratio. Harrell's C values of .56, .64, and .71 are considered small, moderate, and large effect sizes, respectively. ns non-significant, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table B6

Rates of discretionary release by security level

	SRSW Recommendation	Final Security Placement
	% (*n*)	% (*n*)
Minimum	67 (123)	69 (141)
Medium	33 (54)	25 (37)
Maximum	7 (3)	5 (2)
Wald χ^2 (df)	72.4 (2) ***	101.8 (2)***
AUC	0.72	0.76

Note. df = degrees of freedom; Area Under the Curve (AUC) values of .56, .64, and .71 are considered small, moderate, and large effect sizes, respectively. ns non-significant, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table B7

Rates of returns to custody by security level

SRSW Security Level Recommendation	% (*n*)	HR
Minimum	35 (64)	-
Medium	39 (65)	1.39ns
Maximum	47 (21)	2.02**
Model fit		
Wald χ^2 (df)	8.7 (2)*	
Harrell's c	0.57	
Final Security Level Decision		
Minimum	34 (70)	-
Medium	39 (58)	1.51*
Maximum	50 (22)	2.37***
Model fit		
Wald χ^2 (df)	13.7 (2)***	
Harrell's c	0.59	

Note. The percentages associated in this table do not control for time at risk; however, the hazard ratios, Wald χ^2, and Harrell's c values control for time at risk.
HR = hazard ratio. Harrell's C values of .56, .64, and .71 are considered small, moderate, and large effect sizes, respectively. ns non-significant, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001